

to be highly commended for this first of 14 anticipated volumes of the papers of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. sponsored by The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change in association with Stanford University and Emory University.

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The excellent introductory essay traces King's roots in the black Baptist church to his slave great-grandfather, Willis Williams (1810-1874), who belonged to an antebellum white Baptist church in which blacks predominated numerically but were subordinate. After the war, the black members withdrew and organized a black-controlled church. There is valuable information here about King's grandfather, Adam Daniel Williams (1863-1931), who as pastor of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church supported the Georgia Equal Rights League and the militant black nationalist AME Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, and served as a founder of Atlanta's NAACP. King's father, Martin Luther King Sr., who married A. D. Williams's daughter and succeeded him as pastor of Ebenezer, legally changed his name and that of his son from Michael Luther to Martin Luther after a trip to Europe. Like his father-in-law, he was a black Baptist pastor with a foot in both the ecclesiastical world of Baptist church politics and the black community's struggle against segregation and institutional racism. Martin Luther King Sr. was a leader in many organizations, including the NAACP.

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monstrated great skill in adapting them to the faith with which he entered the seminary. In reading his essays at Crozer on topics ranging from "The Christian Pertinence of Eschatological Hope" to "The Chief Characteristics of the Doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism," one is impressed with King's analysis and synthesis, which are essentially derivative, but also by his conclusions, which invariably affirm his traditional orthodox faith. In an essay on the place of reason and experience in finding God, King extols reason but concludes that experience is "probably the primal way" and "open to all levels of human intelligence." One can trace his growing theological sophistication, a sophistication that returns again and again to his roots.

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The note of Christian optimism, the belief that, in spite of civil and human suffering God's will would ultimately triumph in the world and bring liberation and salvation to all people, was sounded early in King's writings. As a high school student he delivered an oration on "The Negro and the Constitution." King cited the experiences of Marian Anderson and discussed the contradictions among biblical faith, constitutional guarantees and the continuing problem of racism. He concluded, "My heart throbs anew in the hope that, inspired by the example of Lincoln, imbued with the spirit of Christ, they will cast down the last barriers to perfect freedom." In dealing with the problem of evil in a Crozer essay, King quoted, as he was to do many times in his career, the poem by James Russell Lowell

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